



**Statement from the
European Federation of Catholic Married Priests
regarding the welcome offered by Rome to
to the married Anglican Priests disillusioned with their
own Church**

The European Federation of Catholic Married Priests feels that it is appropriate to offer its own take on the Vatican decision to allow married Anglican priests and their communities to be integrated into the Roman Catholic Church under certain conditions.

1. This decision, together with the existing tradition of married priests in the oriental rite, could slowly give rise to the belief that it is normal for there to be married and celibate priests working alongside each other within the Roman Catholic Church, even if this was not the original intention. *This diversity of priestly ministry can only be seen as fruitful and as a stage towards pluralism in the priestly ministry.*
2. *The organisations of married priests assert that **celibacy for priests is an optional state** and the majority of Christians agree, as is clear from various polls. This freedom does no damage to the unity of the Church and it is a perfectly justified way of life. It also prevents the wellbeing of communities from being subordinated to the personal life choices of priests. We maintain, therefore, that this freedom is needed for pastoral reasons when communities want it or decide to have it.*
3. Having said that, it is difficult to see how **this decision by Rome can ever be justified** as there is not a shred of supporting ecclesiology to sustain it --- that is unless it is also accompanied by the offer of re-admission to ministry of those catholic priests who have married and who wish to resume ministry. More than 100,000 married catholic priests have been prevented from exercising their ministry. Our view is that to consider these latter as traitors while at the same time believing it is alright to encourage a group of married Anglican priests to break their allegiance to the Anglican Communion *is hypocritical*. When the situations are compared there is clearly a danger that this will give rise to great confusion within our communities.
4. It is such an arbitrary and difficult to understand decision - unless, of course, we take for granted *the fundamentalist and conservative views which are at the core of this group of married priests* for whom the Catholic Church is throwing open its doors. They are against the ordination of women and the possibility of homosexuals being priests in the Anglican Communion, both of which were agreed as acceptable by a majority vote of that communion. However, the Vatican seems to have decided that **the type of priest** in which it places its trust is not one that is aligned with Gospel openness nor capable of reading the signs that the Holy Spirit is at work.
5. *It seems to us that this gesture **damages ecumenism** because it fails to take account of the many years of **dialogue** in order to pursue a **return to Catholicism**. Rather than bearing in mind the progress made during Vatican II and in the ARCIC discussions on the eucharist, ministries, and authority in The Church, the Vatican is dishonestly recruiting by allowing Christians to get around a decision of their own Church. By doing this it increases division in a Church that is already having so much difficulty trying to sort out disputes touching in particular on important issues of morality.*
6. If pluralism entails accepting that the Anglicans can organise themselves and celebrate in their own way while still being part of the Roman Catholic Church, why not allow this also in Latin America and in Africa, for example? **It would be a sound basis on which to show respect for the difference of cultures, the priority of communities and the bonds tying ministers to them.** To create a genuine atmosphere of pluralism each community should be allowed to choose the person best suited to exercise the ministry, whether male or female, celibate or married and to discuss the different ways of understanding ministries. Care would need to be taken to ensure that the pluralism of ministries *did not give rise to discriminatory practice between married priests and celibate priests.*

In name of the EFCMP, on November 4th, 2009

Ramón Alario (E), Claude Bertin (F), Ennio Bolognese (A), Paul Bourgeois (B), Franco Brescia (I),
Marcel Brilliant (F), Pierre Collet (B), Jean Combe (F), Bernard Corbineau (F), Wilhelm Gatzen (D),
Mike Hyland (UK), Lorenzo Maestri (I), Joe Mulrooney (UK), Julio Perez Pinillos (E), Damian Sassin (D)

www.marriedpriests.eu